



# Let's Talk About the Stroke Family Caregiver

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## What is a stroke family caregiver?

People who provide help for stroke survivors are often called caregivers. Everyone involved in helping a stroke survivor is a caregiver — the spouse, family members and friends. Often one person, generally a spouse, will provide most of the care.

It's important that caregivers and stroke survivors strive to be "care partners" in their efforts. It's often a challenge for both to adjust to their changed roles. The adjustment may be easier if the caregiver and stroke survivor share in decision-making as much as possible and try to share their feelings honestly.



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## What should a caregiver do?

There is no one "job description" that explains what all caregivers do. Each caregiver's responsibilities vary according to the unique needs of the stroke survivor. This may require several adjustments. Role changes and new skills may need to be learned. Common responsibilities of caregiving include:

- Physical help with personal cares and transportation.
- Managing financial, legal and business affairs.
- Monitoring behavior to ensure safety.
- Managing housework and meal preparation.
- Coordinating healthcare and monitoring medications.
- Helping the survivor maintain learned rehab skills and work to improve them.
- Providing emotional support for the stroke survivor and family members.
- Encouraging the stroke survivor to be as independent as possible.

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## Is there assistance for caregivers?

Many people find caring for another person very rewarding. But there are times when a stroke survivor's needs are too much for any one person. Sometimes a caregiver just

needs a break. The following community resources may be helpful:

- **Adult day care** — professional supervision of adults in a social setting

during the day.

- **Adult foster homes** — supervised care in approved (licensed) private homes.
- **Meal programs** (Meals on Wheels) — a federally sponsored nutrition program.
- **Home health aide service** — in-home personal care assistance.

- **Homemaker assistance** — supervised, trained personnel who help with household duties.
- **Respite care** — people come into the home for a limited time to give caregivers a break. Some nursing homes will also provide short-term respite care.






## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets available.
- For more information on stroke, or to receive additional fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers, trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection Magazine*, a free publication for stroke survivors and caregivers

## What are the Warning Signs of Stroke?

-  **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
-  **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
-  **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
-  **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
-  **Sudden, severe headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke.  
*Because time lost is brain lost.*

Today there are treatments that can reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly – within 3 hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

## Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

What services are available in my community?

Is there a stroke support group or caregiver support group in my area?

Do you know of any other national organizations that support caregivers?

*The statistics in this kit were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at [americanheart.org/statistics](http://americanheart.org/statistics).*

*The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. Your contributions will support research and educational programs that help reduce disability and death from stroke.*

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